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EDITORIAL

THE DICTIONARY SQUABBLE

The squabble of rival dictionary-makers over the question of key alphabets is one of those Donnybrook affairs from which the innocent bystander will discreetly retire while the fight is young. Otherwise he may find himself, in the terse language of Christy Mahon, "split to the knob of his gullet." Vituperation and acrid personalities, charges of conspiracy and countercharges of subornation, have now reached a point where the actual comparative merit of the two systems is in danger of being altogether forgotten. The blunt truth in the case is that from the scientific point of view both alphabets are bad, while from the practical point of view nobody knows, or can know for many years to come, which is the worse. In view of this fact, it is most unfortunate that reputable scholars have, by the turn of events, been made to appear as strenuous defenders of that which, strictly speaking, admits of no defense. We would recommend to every phonetician who wishes to preserve his self-respect the remark of one who, taking sides in a similar brawl, had reason to regret it: "A plague o' both your houses."

CONCERNING CRANKS

The flood of educational investigation and experiment—of graphs and monographs—is not only impending, it has arrived; and soon its current may be sweeping the traditions of all schools—college, secondary, and primary—from their anchorage. With it is likewise impending, so it is said, the educational crank and hobby rider, so called usually because he wants to find out, or has found out, or thinks he has found out, something new, and persists in advertising the fact to the great discomfort of them that seek repose. Sometimes the discovery is unimportant, for much experiment must be fruitless and much investigation valueless, except negatively, to put warning notices up on misleading roads;

but even thus negatively the work of the crank may be worth all that it costs.

Again and conversely, the crank may at any moment prove to be the power that moves the entire machine, as he should be. Not all wisdom is with the old, not all foolishness with the new. A crank may be well aware that even he cannot measure the immeasurable or "unscrew the inscrutable" and yet not be thereby discouraged from ascertaining by continued tests of many teachers and pupils the relative efficiency of two methods of teaching spelling, or even the number of hours necessary for the average teacher to read a hundred thousand words of average high-school themes. Then, finding that he has made a positive contribution to knowledge, he may feel encouraged to proceed to other and more important contributions, and eventually by virtue of his successes reach the serene conclusion that after all it is the crank that makes the world go round.

In this connection it may be observed that systematic investigation and experiment to determine scientifically some of the thousands of educational problems that may be so determined, without any chasing of moonbeams or any meddling with psychics as such, is now under way everywhere, by national and state organizations and committees, by individual schools, and by individual teachers; but that in proportion to what lies ahead the work is hardly begun. Some problems may be studied by individuals acting almost alone or by single small groups; others require the co-operation of many individuals or many groups. The *Journal* undertakes not only to make public the results obtained, but to find business for all willing workers that offer themselves. If you have already found out something, or if you would like to help find out something, or if there is something that you wish to find out, if you wish to help or to be helped, let the *Journal* know. Work and workers, jointly or severally, are both welcome.